



SDMS Doc ID 2014596



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

DEC 18 2002

THE ADMINISTRATOR

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-0504

Dear Senator Feinstein:

Thank you for your letter of November 27, 2002, concerning the serious impacts of perchlorate contamination in Southern California. I share your concern that the water supply remain sufficient to meet the needs of the affected communities, and assure you that the perchlorate contamination problem is receiving the immediate attention of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

As you note in your letter, perchlorate has been detected at more than 280 water supply wells operated by 75 different water agencies in Southern California. Investigation and cleanup activities at many of these sites are being directed by EPA and several State agencies. Ten Federal Superfund sites are among the locations where perchlorate contamination has been detected. Investigation work is underway at all of these Superfund sites, and cleanup has been started at three. In particular, considerable progress has been made at the Aerojet Superfund Site in Rancho Cordova, where Aerojet has been operating a full-scale perchlorate treatment system since 1998. Additionally, at the Baldwin Park/San Gabriel Valley site, the first of four planned perchlorate treatment systems has been operating since 2000, and two more systems are expected to go online by mid-2003. When complete, the four Baldwin Park treatment systems will clean more than 33 million gallons per day. Over the next 15 years, EPA expects that more than \$200 million will be spent on cleanup of perchlorate and other groundwater contaminants at the Baldwin Park site alone.

At a number of locations where perchlorate has been detected, State agencies are directly overseeing investigation and cleanup work. The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection is overseeing cleanup work in Henderson, Nevada, which is the source of contamination to the Colorado River; the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board is overseeing work in the Rialto-Colton-Fontana area in San Bernardino County; and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control is overseeing several sites in Southern California. Where the State Agencies are taking the lead, EPA is working with them to identify responsible parties and provide technical assistance as needed.

As you noted, the situation is particularly acute in the Rialto-Colton area where perchlorate has been found in more than 20 wells at concentrations above the State of California action level of 4 parts per billion. The Agency is committed to working with State and local officials to address the presence of perchlorate at the Rialto-Colton site. Although the initial response of removing most of the wells from active service will be effective during low-demand seasons of the winter and spring, the loss of these wells may create a water supply shortage by the summer of 2003. The Regional Administrator, Wayne Nastri, is personally working with his counterparts at the California Environmental Protection Agency to address the situation at the Rialto-Colton site. The State has moved forward with significant efforts, issuing investigation orders to eight current or former facilities in the area. Additionally, the State is providing \$3 million in funds to assist the four affected water companies with the purchase of water treatment equipment. EPA and the State Agencies are also working with researchers at the U.S. Geological Survey to better understand groundwater flow in the area so a long-term cleanup plan can be designed.

Holding the responsible parties accountable for this contamination is of utmost importance. EPA is working with the California Environmental Protection Agency, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control to identify and document the liability of any Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) that may have contributed to the perchlorate contamination. The Agency is also assisting with efforts to obtain a commitment from the Department of Defense to investigate "Formerly Used Defense Sites" in the area.

Again, thank you for sharing your concerns. I assure you that the Agency will continue to work closely with the State and local agencies to address the plume of perchlorate that is affecting the public water supply in Rialto, Colton and western San Bernardino County. Please contact me or the Regional Administrator Wayne Nastri if you have any additional questions or concerns, or your staff may contact Betsy Henry in the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations at (202) 564-7222.

Sincerely yours,



Christine Todd Whitman